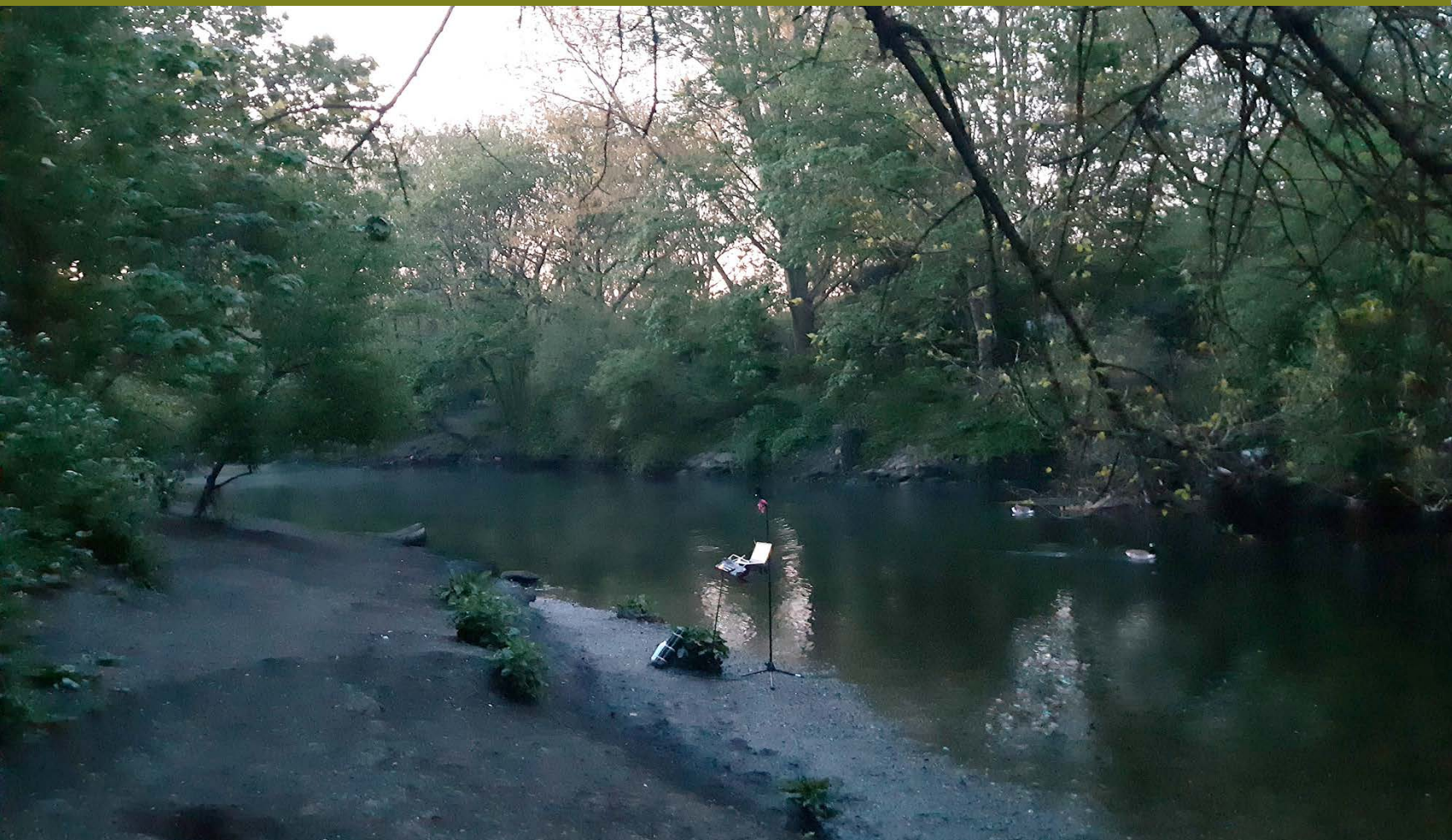


I double-check everything is connected. I exhale, take a deep breath and blow...

by Laonikos Psimikakis Chalkokondylis

What does it feel like to share the same air, water, and soil with all the animals and plants of this place? What does this land sound like, and how can we blend in, in a playful and creative manner, not as visitors but as residents too?

These are some of the thoughts in my mind as I walk to a nature spot in Hackney Marshes, east London, where I can safely cross the thicket of nettles and bramble and onto the northern banks of River Lea. It is 4am and this is a place of immense local beauty and serenity. In these early hours I seem to be alone—or, rather, the only human around, but in the company of many animals. I have come here to participate at Soundcamp Reveil (French for “awakening”), a 24-hour live broadcast of the sounds of dawn across the globe: I’m one of over 100 people setting up “soundcamps” globally, streaming the sounds of dawn from 4.53am and for about half an hour, the duration of sunrise on this day.



After the “clean” stream is finished, I pick up my shakuhachi and walk over to my laptop and microphone. I am about to being livestreaming an improvisation with shakuhachi and live electronics and birdsong to whoever is tuning in. I pause to listen—I can see and hear kingfishers, herons, gulls, blackbirds, wrens, blue tits, great tits, pied wagtails, chaffinches, turtle doves, ring-necked parakeets, robins, geese, coots and many others. Some mallards land in the water, ruffling the calm surface of the water; a heron spreads his wings dramatically to scare off a gull from his territory. But beyond these occasional foreground brushstrokes, there is just the distant sound of the motorway and the occasional train, or the footsteps of very eager dog walkers on the south banks of the river — a soft balance of sounds where human and the more-than-human coexist fairly peacefully, as residents of the land around River Lea.

I double-check everything is connected. I exhale, take a deep breath and blow, doing my best to blend in and offer my own sounds in this morning’s dawn chorus.

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/cXzcd9AWn0I>

Laonikos’ album ‘loess’ was released in October 2022 by the Netherlands-based Slow Tone Collages, and you can listen to it here: <https://slowtonecollages.bandcamp.com/album/loess>

Laonikos is happy to offer a free download code to the first ten ESS Newsletter readers who ask for one via email.